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First Committee
9th Meeting
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New York

Chairman: Mr. González . . . . . (Chile)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Seibert (Germany), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 64, 65 and 67 to 85 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): My delegation would like to congratulate the Chairman most sincerely on his assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I assure him and the other members of the Bureau of wholehearted support in the discharge of his important responsibilities. I also wish to thank Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his most encouraging statement.

The past year will be remembered as a lost year, in which opportunities for further progress in arms control and disarmament eluded us. For the majority of the citizens of our countries who desire peace and stability as a guarantee of socio-economic development and progress, the incapacity of the multilateral disarmament machinery to make meaningful progress towards the lofty goal of general and complete disarmament was a very disappointing development. This Committee will therefore need to undertake an appraisal of the effectiveness of the existing disarmament machinery, by assessing past successes and failures, and renew its commitment to the cause of disarmament in the next millennium.

The situation we have all witnessed in the past year is a record of disagreement and the hardening of positions. The world had expected ratification of the START II agreement, which gave much hope to mankind when it was signed in 1993, but unfortunately this has not yet happened. My Government believes that the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral negotiating forum, should be allowed to commence substantive discussions on all nuclear disarmament issues. There is a need for the nuclear-weapon States to revive the steady progress on the elimination of nuclear arsenals that had gathered momentum during the cold war.

In reviewing our work in 1999 against the gloomy background I have described, we note some positive developments too. The entry into force of the Ottawa Convention, the option by some States to implement the core provision of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) — the destruction of stockpiles and production facilities, and the adoption by the Disarmament Commission of the guidelines on conventional arms control, provide a foundation on which to build in the coming year.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was seen as the pillar of the non-proliferation regime on nuclear disarmament, appears to be in great danger of unravelling. While the non-nuclear-weapon States have been faithful to their commitments under the Treaty, my delegation is concerned that some of the 44 States listed in annex 2 to the Treaty, whose support is critical to its entry into force, are still holding out.

The failure of our collective moral strength to achieve progress in the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT

99-86149 (E)

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Review Conference vindicates the efforts of the new agenda coalition in sponsoring a draft resolution that should renew the debate on nuclear disarmament. Given the disappointing record of the past year on this subject, my delegation would appeal to the Committee to send a strong message by supporting the draft resolution, which has been amended to accommodate the concern that some States expressed in the Committee last year.

My Government is also concerned about the current dangerous level of the proliferation of, and illicit trafficking in, small arms and light weapons. These weapons, which are the most widely used instruments of war in the developing world, have a serious negative impact on the stability of sovereign States. It is my Government's view that responsibility for the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons should not lie entirely with the recipient parties. The continued proliferation and illegal transfers of small arms, particularly to non-State entities, is, among other factors, responsible for the supply of the weapons being used in conflict situations across the African continent. The producing and exporting countries should bear the moral and legal responsibility for preventing the acquisition of these weapons by recipients other than legitimate Governments. Zambia therefore welcomes the international conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons scheduled for 2001. We hope that the conference will build on the wealth of knowledge of small arms and light weapons already held by many regional bodies to ensure a successful preparatory process leading to the conference.

The suffering caused by anti-personnel mines across the world, particularly in the developing countries, requires our urgent attention. My country continues to experience the effects of mines planted by the belligerents during the anti-colonial wars in southern Africa, which were partly fought from our soil. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which has been signed by an overwhelming number of the nations represented here, offers an opportunity for a global effort to eliminate this kind of weapon. Anti-personnel landmines continue to kill and maim innocent civilians, most of the time long after hostilities have ceased. My country wishes to take this opportunity to support the view expressed by many representatives in the Committee that in order to ensure the worldwide implementation of the Ottawa Convention some of its provisions need to be applied on a provisional basis to given countries, pending its final entry into force. Every effort should be made to make the landmines Convention universal and ensure that its provisions are fully implemented. Anti-personnel landmines hinder the socio-economic development of many countries.

In the case of Zambia, landmines planted in large tracts of land along the border areas by both sides in the wars of liberation of yesteryear have rendered unusable what would otherwise be productive and usable land. Given its socio-economic impact, the landmines problem needs urgent attention and practical measures. This is not the time to cast blame for the problem. What is required is an international mine clearance programme, adequately funded to meet the cost of removal, demining and the socio-economic rehabilitation of the victims and affected land.

In this regard, my delegation applauds the work of the United Nations Mine Action Service, the focal point within the United Nations system for all mine-related activities. It has the daunting task of reducing the suffering caused by landmines and their impact upon people and communities. We urge adequate funding of its Voluntary Trust Fund to enable it to carry out its work.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) bans an entire category of weapons of mass destruction and has established a strict, universally applied international control mechanism. As my country possesses no chemical weapons, we fully support the Convention. However, as with other disarmament agreements, where the support of the major actors is required, the support of the major chemical-weapons countries is a necessity to ensure universal adherence and the effectiveness of the Convention.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to stress the need to strengthen the multilateral approach to disarmament and international security. The success scored by the Chemical Weapons Convention, the CTBT and the Convention on anti-personnel landmines is a pointer to the effectiveness of this approach. It is the Committee's duty to ensure that humanity enters the third millennium judiciously committed to a multilateral approach with a view to achieving the all-embracing and effective collective security system envisioned in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I should like to begin by congratulating the Chairman on his election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. I am confident that, given his diplomatic skill and rich experience, he will successfully guide the Committee. My delegation will fully cooperate with him and the other members of the Bureau, as well as

other delegations, for a successful conclusion to the work of the First Committee.

The realization of effective disarmament is a prerequisite for international security, and represents a unanimous aspiration of humankind. In the past several decades disarmament issues have been debated with specific interests and concerns in the First Committee and other international forums. That is a reflection of the firm views and stands of all countries and peoples on disarmament issues. As we are entering a new millennium, however, global disarmament, which is still a pressing issue, is confronted with various grave challenges.

First, hegemonism and power politics are creating grave obstacles to global disarmament. Indeed, some nuclear-weapon States still rely on the nuclear deterrence theory while maintaining large nuclear arsenals. In addition, the existing military bloc in Europe is expanded and strengthened, on the one hand, while the process of forming a new military bloc is accelerated in North-East Asia, on the other hand. While an increasing number of sovereign States are under armed attack, the "Star Wars" plan of the cold-war era, disguised as the national missile defence system, or the theatre missile defence system, is openly pushed forward. Such hegemonism and power politics, forced upon international society against the aspirations and desires of humankind, not only present obstacles to global disarmament, but also pose new threats of a global arms race.

Another obstacle to accelerating global disarmament is an attempt to apply double standards. At present, while some military Powers produce, develop and deploy sophisticated weapons at will, the self-defence efforts of other countries, especially developing countries, are being questioned under the plea of disarmament and non-proliferation. In the north-east Asian region in particular, the real threats from a collective arms build-up and military alliances go neglected, and we are very concerned that attempts at militarization and nuclearization through the stockpiling of a large quantity of plutonium by Japan are tolerated and even encouraged, while political and economic sanctions and military threats are applied to some countries under various pretexts.

After all, for as long as hegemonism, power politics and the application of double standards in disarmament are allowed, neither significant progress in the process of disarmament nor international peace and security can be guaranteed. Therefore, my delegation strongly believes that hegemonism and power politics, including the use of arms against sovereign States, should not be tolerated and the application of double standards in disarmament should cease.

To this end, the important issue is, *inter alia*, to respect each country's right of self-defence. All countries have equal self-defence rights, regardless of the size of territory and level of development. That is the legitimate right accorded by the Charter of the United Nations. Moreover, in the reality of today, in which absolute military supremacy is openly proclaimed and power is unhesitatingly used in international relations, as in the collective use of armed force against small and weak countries, it becomes an ever-more pressing question for each country to safeguard the right of self-defence. Therefore, disarmament issues should be debated in the framework of respecting the sovereign right of every country. Only when that is done can global disarmament be impartial and effective.

Another important issue in accelerating the process of disarmament is that military Powers show political will by taking practical steps towards real disarmament. Looking back upon the process of international disarmament so far, we see that the arsenals of military Powers have been improved both in quality and in quantity as a result of the replacement of obsolete weapons with sophisticated ones, while emphasizing non-proliferation. Consequently, no genuine disarmament could be achieved. In view of this fact, international disarmament should no longer serve the absolute military supremacy of certain countries. The military Powers should take real steps first so that tangible progress can be made in the field of global disarmament.

Another problem in the disarmament process is to define its priority correctly. In this respect, nuclear disarmament should be a top priority in global disarmament, and the objective of nuclear disarmament should be the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The existence of nuclear weapons itself poses constant threats to world peace and security. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the world can never be stable and we cannot create a peaceful twenty-first century.

Based on such a principled stand for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, my delegation is in favour of resolution 53/77 W, entitled "Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*". Contrary to this resolution, however, no multilateral negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a nuclear-weapon convention have been commenced, due to the continued pursuance of the

nuclear deterrence theory of the cold-war era and the one-sided insistence on nuclear non-proliferation by some nuclear-weapon States. In view of this situation, my delegation still maintains that the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV) should be convened as early as possible with a view to establishing the objective and direction of nuclear disarmament.

The political and military confrontational structure of the cold-war era still remains on the Korean peninsula, which is becoming the focus of international concern. The principal factor is that the United States and its followers do not give up hostile policies towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It is fortunate that the United States, which set forth its policy objective to put the whole Korean peninsula under its control half a century ago, has pledged to respect the sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and treat it impartially, through the 1993 New York Joint Statement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States and the Geneva Agreed Framework of 1994. However, contrary to its pledges, the United States since then has been constantly threatening the sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by deploying huge armed forces and weapons of mass destruction on the Korean peninsula and in its neighbourhood. Moreover, the United States described our satellite launch as a missile threat, in order to make an issue of it, and it has already completed its Operation Plan 5027-98 aimed at eliminating our system. All these acts of the United States clearly prove that it is still pursuing the policy of stifling our socialist system.

During the past half century Japan has followed the United States policy of stifling the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and continuing to antagonize it. In particular, recently Japan has been inciting a hostile atmosphere against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by claiming that our satellite launch constitutes a missile threat. The reason for such acts by Japan is that it is foolishly miscalculating that it can speed up militarization on the pretext of threats from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and when our system disappears, as envisaged in the United States plan, it can be relieved of the burden of liquidating its past crimes. The South Korean authorities also intensify military collaboration with the United States and Japan against the north and persistently pursue a confrontational policy camouflaged as the "sunshine policy".

Under these circumstances, it is natural that in order to cope with the massive power and stifling policy of the United States and its followers we should strengthen our self-defence capabilities, even though we lack almost everything and still have a number of difficulties ahead of us. All the facts show that the continuing confrontation, which could spark another war at any moment on the Korean peninsula, is entirely attributable not to threats from us, but to the hostile policies towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of the United States and its followers.

In order to ensure permanent peace on the Korean peninsula, the hostile relations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States should be removed before anything else. To this end, the essential requirements are that the United States give up the hostile policy against us and adopt an impartial policy, which would not instigate a north-south confrontation. Accordingly, the United States should declare that it discards its policy objectives of destroying our system ultimately, ease all sanctions against us comprehensively, and remove military belligerency with us by concluding a peace treaty with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Japan should abandon its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by stopping all political and military clamours against us and liquidating its past crimes.

If the United States and its followers come up with sincere intentions after discarding their hostile policies against us, we will respond with good faith by resolving their concerns. But if they remain unchanged in their policies of stifling our country we will respond with strong self-defence measures. Through the Geneva talks in 1994 and the Berlin talks last September, we clearly showed our will that while we do not tolerate any attempts to infringe upon our sovereignty, we respond with sincerity when other parties also treat us with sincerity.

In order to ensure durable peace and security on the Korean peninsula, the reunification question should also be solved as soon as possible. Given the unique reality prevailing on the Korean peninsula, the dismantling of a confrontational structure and relaxation of the tense situation are not possible without moving forward to realizing Korea's reunification. Therefore, talking about peace and security or reconciliation and cooperation while putting aside the reunification question is nothing but empty words and deception.

The reunification of Korea should be realized in the form of a confederation on the basis of the three principles of independence, peaceful reunification and great national

unity. It is undeniable that two different social systems have existed in the north and the south for the last half century, and neither side is willing to give up its system. Dreaming of realizing reunification based on one system while ignoring the present reality is in no way realistic and will inevitably cause confrontation. Therefore, the most desirable method of realizing reunification is the proposal on confederal reunification on the basis of one nation, one State, two systems and two governments. Confederal reunification represents the most fair and realistic reunification method, a method which is acceptable to both the north and the south and conforms to the interests of the other countries concerned.

If the United States is really interested in dismantling the confrontational structure and ensuring lasting peace on the Korean peninsula, as it has officially stated on several occasions in recent days, it should demonstrate its sincere impartiality by supporting confederal reunification. The South Korean authorities should respond positively to our proposal on confederal reunification without depending on outside forces, and in a spirit of national independence take practical measures for north-south reconciliation and cooperation aimed at confederation, such as the abolition of the National Security Law.

The dismantling of political and military confrontation and ensuring peace on the Korean peninsula will greatly contribute to security in North-East Asia and the rest of the world and to global disarmament. The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will strive to ensure peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and realize the country's reunification in the form of confederation.

Mr. Al-Sindi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to convey to the Chairman, on behalf of my delegation, most sincere congratulations on his assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We are fully confident that the Chairman's ability and diplomatic skills will lead to a successful outcome of the Committee's work. I cannot fail to pay tribute to the efforts of his predecessor, Ambassador Mernier of Belgium, at the last session. Likewise, I wish to pay tribute to, and express appreciation of, the efforts made by Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala. I commend his detailed and comprehensive statement, in which he focused on a number of significant and urgent issues related to disarmament and international security. We also wish to thank the secretariat, the Conference Service workers and interpreters for their excellent work.

As we approach a new century, we have cautious optimism vis-à-vis the continued slackening and lack of seriousness in the achievement of the legitimate aspirations of our peoples, whose aim it is to live in peace and security. Weapons of mass destruction still pose a threat to our world, a matter which requires that States that are not permanent members of the Security Council, especially those possessing nuclear weapons, urgently reach a decision to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). A positive compromise is needed for the success of the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

My delegation wishes to reaffirm its commitment to accede to disarmament treaties, starting with the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Protocol to the Chemical Weapons Convention on the prohibition of the use of asphyxiating or toxic gases, and on their destruction, and finally the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We also wish to thank and pay tribute to all those who have rendered assistance to eliminate such weapons and to assist the victims that have suffered from their consequences.

My delegation believes that compliance with Conventions on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, especially nuclear non-proliferation in the Middle East, is in order. Such proliferation constitutes a grave threat to the peoples of the region and requires us to call on Israel, the only State in the area that has not acceded to the Treaty, to accede without any further delay. We call upon Israel not to develop any nuclear weapons nor to produce, test or acquire such weapons by any means. All its unsafeguarded military and nuclear installations should be placed under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. This would be one of the most important confidence-building measures among all the States of the area. It would constitute a step towards the realization of peace, security and development in the area.

I seize this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, a zone also free of other forms of weapons of mass destruction, in the Middle East. We are fully prepared to make a modest contribution to achieving general and complete disarmament. Because of my country's strategic position overlooking the Indian Ocean and the Horn of Africa, we are making modest efforts in the work of the Committee on the implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

We also support the Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa. In the same vein, we support the conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. A unified formula should be agreed upon that could be included in an internationally binding instrument that would give a sense of security to those States that do not possess nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.

My delegation wishes also to pay tribute to the efforts being made to reduce military budgets. It wishes to focus here on the importance of the implementation of the recommendation of the General Assembly on the provision of assistance to developing countries and on the promotion of transparency in military expenditures and integration of reporting methods. We also maintain that developments in the field of information and telecommunications, and the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament, require further efforts in order to provide the necessary circumstances to sensitize and prepare cadres in developing countries so that they can cope with scientific developments in this respect.

My delegation attaches great importance to the issue of illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons and the question of providing assistance to States in order to control and collect such weapons. We believe that it is extremely important to grapple with this issue, study its magnitude and scope and then take the necessary measures to control it. Therefore, we support the call for the holding of an international conference on the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons in 2001. Consideration of the details necessary for its success should take place in a way that will not affect the sovereignty of States and the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, I wish to quote from the statement of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen, Mr. Abdul-Qader Ba-Jammal, to the General Assembly at its current session. He expressed our sincere desire that stability and security should prevail throughout the area, with everyone continuing efforts

> "to arrive at mutual understanding, balanced relationships and firm bases for the achievement of coexistence and harmony among States and peoples, the consolidation of peace and the securing of the necessary conditions for development and cooperation." (*A/54/PV.19*)

Mr. Pierce (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) — Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

I join previous speakers in congratulating the Chairman and the other members of the Bureau on their election. I wish to assure the Chairman of the fullest support of our delegation as he undertakes the challenging task of leading the Committee's consideration of the difficult issues that we must once again address during this session.

I also wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, for his introductory statement and to express our appreciation to his team in the Department for Disarmament Affairs for their work during the past year.

The responsibility of our Committee's agenda weighs heavily on our shoulders, because of our inability to make meaningful progress on issues of critical importance to the maintenance of international peace and security. The reports before us record yet another year of unfulfilled commitments, stalled action and dissension on all matters concerning nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. CARICOM States share the view that continued stalemate on the disarmament agenda will inevitably result in the erosion of progress thus far achieved — a prospect we dare not contemplate.

Efforts to monitor and regulate conventional arms, however, showed more positive results, and we strongly encourage continued work to address urgent issues in this area, since undoubtedly the greatest injury and loss of human life result from these weapons. Chief among them are small arms and light weapons. The proliferation of and the illegal trafficking in small arms are of great concern to CARICOM member States. I pause here to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on the subject, particularly those from the Chairman of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which contained very useful recommendations, and the Chairman of the Group of Experts on the problem of ammunition and explosives.

Within recent years the illicit arms trade has reached alarming proportions. One of its most troubling manifestations in the Caribbean has been the linkage with

the narcotics trade and a frightening escalation in the level of violence. This has seriously damaged development prospects and undermined peace and security, and increasingly it poses a threat to the stability of our countries and also to international peace and security.

CARICOM member States took part in the drafting and adoption by the Organization of American States (OAS) of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials. The Convention is the first binding regional agreement to explicitly address small arms and light weapons as well as explosives. States parties are committed to harmonizing their national legislation and to promoting and facilitating cooperation and information exchange to curb the illegal movement of these weapons through the region.

The Convention also has requirements for appropriate markings to be made at the time of manufacture, including a serial number, the name of the manufacturer and the place of manufacture, so as to facilitate tracing and identification. Provision is also made for markings on imported or confiscated firearms. The Convention also allows for the exchange of information among States parties on authorized producers, dealers, importers, exporters and carriers of firearms, explosives and ammunition. That is a step in the right direction.

We note the recommendation of the Group of Experts to include in the marking of small arms ammunition at least three of the following elements in a standardized format: the factory of production; the year of production; and the batch or lot of production. The issue of marking is also dealt with in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. We note with interest that the Governments of Canada and Switzerland have commissioned studies on this question, and that the feasibility of ways of reliably marking small arms as an integral part of the production process received detailed attention at a workshop hosted for the Group of Experts by the Government of Switzerland. We applaud these efforts and urge that more be done in this regard. At present, law enforcement officials who intercept illicit arms and ammunition have great difficulty in tracing them back to their source.

The report of the Group of Governmental Experts points out that one of the main factors contributing to the availability of small arms and light weapons is the increase in the number of legitimate producers, combined with continuing illegitimate arms manufacturing. Small States lacking sophisticated machinery at points of entry, and with limited resources, are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the menace of illicit arms trafficking. In this age of globalization and trade liberalization, if there is to be success in tackling this problem, a way has to be found to balance the demands of free trade and the elimination of barriers to the free movement of goods and services with the imperatives of law enforcement.

The Department for Disarmament Affairs, through the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, held a very useful seminar in Lima during June this year. It provided an opportunity for a closer look at the underlying causes of this problem in our region, and introduced to participants ways in which the United Nations could play a supportive role in our regional disarmament effort. We express our appreciation to the Secretariat for its contribution, and we encourage similar initiatives for the future.

The CARICOM States also note the range of activities undertaken by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) during the past year. The revitalization of the Institute's research programme is also very welcome. We encourage increased research seminars and publications on small arms and strategies to curb the illegal traffic in these weapons, which will undoubtedly assist in equipping States to address problems in this area.

The CARICOM States also welcome the proposed international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, to be held by the year 2001. We incline to the view that its scope and agenda should be as broad as possible so as to promote measures to curb the illicit traffic in arms. It is our hope that States will work together in a genuine effort to elaborate concrete measures and proposals which will address this very important issue.

Anti-personnel landmines are equally repugnant, because of the widespread death and mutilation which they visit on innocent civilian populations. The CARICOM States therefore celebrated the entry into force on 1 March this year of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We also welcomed the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, held in Maputo. We applaud the speed with which this initiative was brought to fruition. The success of this effort demonstrates clearly what can be achieved when there exists the political will to realize a worthy objective. We

now look forward to concerted action to assist affected States with the difficult and urgent task of demining.

The CARICOM States are deeply concerned at the continuing impasse on the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda in both the bilateral and multilateral consultative processes. START II is yet to enter into force. While the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference settled procedural matters, the more important issues of the agenda and objectives for the 2000 Review Conference remain unresolved. Negotiation on a fissile material cut-off treaty is again stalled in the Conference on Disarmament. The CTBT has not entered into force, because the required ratification by certain States has not come about. Interim confidence-building measures on the part of nuclear-weapon States, such as the de-alerting of nuclear warheads, the adoption of legally binding commitments on negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States, and the ceding of the right of first-use of nuclear weapons, are not entertained by most of the States concerned. I could go on.

The general trend that this litany describes shows a scant regard for the obligation owed by nuclear-weapon States to non-nuclear-weapon States as regards mutual security assurances. The CARICOM States hold the view that all States parties to the NPT have an obligation to undertake in good faith that process which leads ultimately to nuclear disarmament. We have not seen evidence of either the political will or the good faith which the current impasse in negotiations on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament will require for positive movement in this area. We share the view that the disarmament obligations in accordance with article VI of the NPT should be respected. We strongly support the call for the initiation of negotiations on a time-bound framework for nuclear disarmament.

The achievement of universality in nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation remains an ideal of which we must not lose sight. The CARICOM States therefore strongly encourage those countries which have not yet acceded to the NPT, and which have yet to ratify the CTBT, to do so without delay.

We wish to underscore our concern at the lack of progress on the treaty to ban the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and explosives. We consider a fissile material cut-off treaty to be an important objective and an essential prerequisite for an effective nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The CARICOM States view the failure of the Disarmament Commission to reach consensus on the objectives and agenda for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV) as yet another demonstration of the scant regard in which the just expectations of non-nuclear-weapon States are held regarding a transparent process towards nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We believe that SSOD-IV can play an important role in the consultative process, which should not only contribute to the fashioning of a programme for future action in the field of disarmament but would also promote confidence- and security-building and strengthen the role of the United Nations in such areas as verification and compliance. Every effort should be made to pursue the convening of SSOD-IV.

We also take note of the re-established high-level Steering Group on Disarmament and Development mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report to the Organization. We look forward to the revitalization of the disarmament for development initiative, which seems to have been all but forgotten.

On a more positive note, the CARICOM States applaud the role that nuclear-weapon-free zones have played in strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. Without doubt, these agreements have contributed significantly to the promotion of regional security and stability. We in the Caribbean are party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which has long served as the model for nuclear-weapon-free zones. We congratulate the Disarmament Commission, which at its session this year reached agreement on principles for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

We underscore that an important element for the success of the nuclear-weapon-free zones is that they should be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned. In this spirit, we look forward to developments which would result in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in Central Asia and the Middle East. We also continue to encourage the development of mechanisms which would promote cooperation among the zones, thus enhancing the international non-proliferation regime.

The CARICOM States have long expressed in this Committee their concern at the serious threat to our fragile marine ecosystem posed by the practice of transporting toxic and radioactive materials through the waters of the Caribbean Sea. CARICOM Heads of Government at their Tenth Inter-Sessional Meeting held in March, and the

Association of Caribbean States at the Summit held in April this year, deplored the continued practice of the trans-shipment of irradiated reactor fuel and other hazardous material through the waters of the region. We are all small island or coastal States, heavily dependent on marine and coastal resources for our economic viability. Such shipments greatly increase the risk of accidents with potentially devastating effects on our fragile environment and on the well-being of the peoples of the region. We therefore renew our call for the international community to address the concerns which we have expressed regarding this practice. We also share the view that the time has come for the international community to address the inadequacies in maritime law so as to promote greater State responsibility, particularly as regards disclosure, liability and compensation in relation to accidents.

We approach the end of the Third Disarmament Decade as we near the new millennium. The Decade will record among its significant events the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on landmines and the Chemical Weapons Convention, the adoption of the CTBT and the indefinite extension of the NPT. But if our legacy for succeeding generations is to be a nuclear-weapon-free world, then we must stop and take stock of our stewardship during the past Disarmament Decade. We will find it wanting. We encourage further assessment and introspection in the hope that this will result in a renewed commitment to the pursuit of real progress in our disarmament agenda.

Mr. Al-Boainain (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like first, on behalf of the delegation of Qatar, to extend my sincere congratulations to the Chairman on his election to the chairmanship of the Committee. I am convinced that thanks to his expertise, skill and diplomatic experience we will be able to conclude our work successfully this session. It is also a pleasure for me to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and to wish all of them success.

I should also like to express my gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for his statement at the beginning of the session and for speaking of the great challenges that the international community faces as a result of the production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their direct effects on international peace and security.

In spite of the efforts made by the United Nations and other disarmament bodies, and the conclusion of various agreements aimed at controlling weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, we are still faced with many challenges and obstacles. In fact, certain States continue to maintain their nuclear armaments and to acquire and develop more weapons of mass destruction of all types. This could create a clear imbalance and disparity in regional and international security schemes. Therefore, the international community must take all necessary measures and actions in order to eliminate and destroy these weapons, through sustained efforts within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament and the NPT Review Conference to be held in the year 2000. This should be done through confidence-building measures and transparency measures in order to establish international peace and security and by redirecting the huge financial resources used for weapons to achieving economic, social and development goals for the well-being of humanity.

Qatar firmly believes in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and has therefore approved the measures taken at the regional and international levels to reduce and limit arms, particularly nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons that are excessively destructive and have long-lasting effects. We ask all members to accede to all these international instruments. Therefore, Qatar has signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty as well as the CTBT, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

We welcome the implementation of measures aimed at stopping the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and we hope that we will be able to reach a positive result in the conference to be held in 2001 for such purposes.

The establishment of peace and security in the world is an objective that must be founded on a set of ideals and principles and must be respected by all States. These ideals and principles include the sovereign equality of States, the right to independence, non-recourse to the use of force or threat of the use of force against the sovereign integrity or political independence of States and the rejection of occupation and expansion at the expense of other States. We should also respect the principle of good neighbourliness and find a peaceful solution to conflicts using international jurisdiction, in keeping with the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law. All States should also have the right to social and economic development. Qatar is in favour of establishing peace and security in our region and also of achieving development for the benefit of the peoples of the region.

The international community has shown an interest in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, particularly in areas of conflict and tension. Given the danger of these weapons, Qatar is in favour of creating such a zone in the Middle East, in keeping with relevant General Assembly resolutions. We urge all States to shoulder their responsibilities and help implement these resolutions in order to attain these objectives. These countries should also ask Israel to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Safeguards Agreement. Israel is the only State in the Middle East that possesses such weapons and still refuses to sign all relevant Treaties. Having these weapons does not lead to stability and security in this vital and sensitive area of the world.

The Middle East witnesses a clear imbalance in military forces between its various States, a matter that can only lead the region to a cycle of conflict, violence and instability. The international community, given the resolutions it has adopted regarding the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, must take all measures and practical steps to eliminate such weapons in this region and spare it the dangers of an arms race which will worsen the present instability and jeopardize the security of its peoples.

In conclusion, humanity aspires to peace and well-being. Therefore, we should try, as we approach the new millennium, to establish a new vision of peace and find a way for humanity to be saved from the dangers of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, so that we can use our resources to meet the expectations of economic and social development, harmony, peace and security.

Mr. Than (Myanmar): On behalf of the 10 ASEAN countries — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam — I have pleasure in making the joint ASEAN statement on issues of disarmament and international security, which is as follows.

We, the 10 ASEAN countries, believe that in the face of challenges and opportunities in the post-cold-war era the Member States of the United Nations ought to intensify their efforts to meet the needs of the time and to achieve concrete results in the field of disarmament and international security. While there exist good opportunities for achieving substantive agreements on nuclear disarmament, we note with concern the growing nuclear danger and the mounting risk of nuclear and missile proliferation. We also view with concern the fact that the nuclear-weapon States are placing greater emphasis and reliance on nuclear weapons, which is not consistent with their declared commitment to nuclear disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons.

We appreciate the reductions of nuclear arsenals by the United States and the Russian Federation and the unilateral measures taken by other nuclear-weapon States. We call upon all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to further undertake effective nuclear disarmament measures leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and, to this end, to enter into and bring to a conclusion negotiations on effective measures of nuclear disarmament. We reiterate our call for the commencement of multilateral negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a phased programme of balanced deep reductions of nuclear weapons, leading to the total elimination of these weapons. We urge the Conference on Disarmament to establish as a matter of the highest priority at the beginning of its 2000 session an ad hoc committee to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament.

In this context, the ASEAN countries and other sponsors introduced the draft that became resolution 53/77 X, entitled "Nuclear disarmament", at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, and ASEAN countries, together with other sponsors, will submit the follow-up draft resolution to the General Assembly at its current session.

We stress the importance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996, and welcome its contribution to the cause of disarmament and international security as well as to the development of international law. In particular, we welcome the ruling of the Court that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be generally contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and its conclusion that there exists an obligation for all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

In this context, ASEAN countries and other sponsors introduced what became resolution 53/77 W, entitled "Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*", at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, and ASEAN countries, together with other

sponsors, will submit the follow-up draft resolution to the General Assembly at its current session.

We join the international clamour for all States to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to accede to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In this context, we urge that the 2000 NPT Review Conference, in accordance with article VIII, paragraph 3, of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and in pursuance of the decision and the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, should: evaluate the results of the periods which the 2000 Review Conference is reviewing, including the implementation of the undertakings of the States parties under the Treaty, and identify the areas in which, and the means through which, further progress should be sought in the future. The 2000 Review Conference should also address specifically what might be done to strengthen the implementation of the Treaty and to achieve its universality. The outcome should reaffirm the validity and importance of the decision on strengthening the review process for the Treaty the decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

We call upon all States to exercise restraint in the development, testing, deployment and transfers of ballistic missiles and other means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction. We support the international efforts to take appropriate steps and to establish international legal norms against the proliferation of these weapon systems.

It is our firm conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned in various parts of the world is an effective measure to prevent the geographic proliferation of nuclear weapons, and contributes to nuclear disarmament. Bearing this in mind, we encourage and support any genuine efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world.

We recall that the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone constitutes an important milestone and contributes to enhancing peace, security and stability in the region. The Treaty entered into force with effect from 27 March 1997. But the Protocol to it is yet to be signed and ratified by the nuclear-weapon States. We welcome and express our support for the ongoing consultations between the States parties to the Treaty and the nuclear-weapon States regarding the urgent need for the nuclear-weapon States to sign and ratify the Protocol. We also welcome the announcements by the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation of their intention to sign the Protocol in the near future. We call upon all the nuclear-weapon States to sign and ratify the Protocol at the earliest possible date.

We also welcome resolution 53/77 D of 4 December 1998 on Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status, and support the earnest efforts to establish a single-State nuclear-weapon-free zone in Mongolia.

We note the progress that has been made on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and call on all States which have not ratified or acceded to the Convention to do so. Progress has also been made in the work on the protocol dealing with compliance with and verification of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). To this end, we commend the work of the Ad Hoc Group of the States parties to the Convention. We also call for the speedy and successful conclusion of the negotiations on the verification protocol to the Convention.

We express deep concern over the lack of consensus in the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission in its 1999 substantive session on the agenda and objectives of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV). We continue to support further steps leading to the convening of SSOD-IV with the participation of all Member States of the United Nations.

We note the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We agree to support initiatives to enhance international cooperation on demining, including training, and the removal of unexploded ordnance, as well as the rehabilitation of mine victims. In this context, we also note that every State has the right to self-defence in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

We express our appreciation to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for its significant contribution to enhancing the regional and subregional dialogues and mutual understanding among the member States on security and disarmament issues in Asia and the Pacific. We recognize that frequent regional meetings, conferences and workshops organized by the Centre are extremely useful and beneficial in this respect. We reaffirm our continuing support for the Centre's ongoing activities and its present interim

arrangement for the Director to operate from United Nations Headquarters in New York.

We, the ASEAN Ten, welcome the admission of Malaysia and four other new members to the Conference on Disarmament. We hope that the membership will be further expanded to make the Conference on Disarmament a more representative and effective body in this field. In this regard, we support the applications for membership by the Philippines and Thailand. We recognize the important role of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating forum dealing with disarmament, and urge the member States to maintain and further strengthen its role in the present-day world of the increasing complexities of disarmament and international security issues.

Mr. Estévez López (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by congratulating the Chairman, on behalf of the delegation of Guatemala, on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We are certain that thanks to the Chairman's experience and his many years of devotion to the work of this body we shall succeed in accomplishing the task that the General Assembly has entrusted to us.

Fifty-four years have elapsed since the end of the most tremendous armed conflict that humankind has suffered, a conflict that because of its characteristics and consequences marked the beginning of a new international order in every sphere of international relations. It was within this new framework that the nuclear era came into being, and with it a race to produce weapons of mass destruction which started to jeopardize international security and the survival of humankind.

In the course of that 54-year period we have witnessed efforts to curb the competition in nuclear weapons. However, despite strenuous efforts, we are nearing the end of the century without achieving our primary objective, which is not only to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also to reach the disarmament stage.

The danger inherent in nuclear weapons is of concern to us all, whether or not we are capable of building them, since their destructive capacity knows no boundaries. Therefore, given the stagnation in regard to both the mechanisms for ensuring non-proliferation and the banning of all nuclear-weapon tests, our delegation appeals to all the parties concerned to intensify their efforts and summon up the necessary political will to overcome the existing deadlock in nuclear disarmament, in order to fulfil the commitment in the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), in which certain States commit themselves to disarmament and others renounce the possession of nuclear weapons.

We note with satisfaction that the START III negotiations between the Russian Federation and the United States are under way, and we hope that it will not be long before some degree of success is achieved. But it is discouraging that, seven years after it was signed, the START II Treaty has still not been ratified by one of the signatories. We therefore appeal for its prompt ratification.

We are pleased that so far 154 States have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). However, we are concerned by the United States Senate's rejection of the Treaty, as well as by the fact that not all the 44 States whose participation is needed for its entry into force have taken the necessary steps. Therefore, based on our understanding of the sentiment that prevails internationally with respect to nuclear weapons, we urge those States which have not yet ratified the Treaty to do so as soon as possible, particularly the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China and the United States of America, as well as India and Pakistan.

We hope that States that have only signed the Treaty will bear in mind that, under article 18 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, by merely signing a treaty a State is bound to respect its basic objectives, a provision that seems to be part of international customary law.

It is a source of great satisfaction to Guatemala that our Latin American and Caribbean region was a pioneer in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We fully understand the significance of these zones and highly appreciate their benefits. We therefore fully support all the efforts being made to establish such zones in other regions. We believe that they can and should become the regional platforms for promoting the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the nuclear disarmament process.

In this respect, we note with satisfaction the progress made in both Central and South-East Asia. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of South Asia or the Middle East. We therefore urge the States of those regions to intensify their efforts so that nuclear-weapon-free zones also become a reality for their peoples. Our efforts should be directed towards ensuring that the use of nuclear energy contributes to the development of humankind and not to its destruction.

Every day we learn through the media about the death of innocent victims in schools, churches, homes and many other places. This brings home to us that in the world in which we live it is not only nuclear weapons that pose a real danger that our societies may be destroyed. Illicit trafficking in and the production of small arms, ammunition and explosives have increased dramatically over the past few years, resulting in political, economic and social problems, to say nothing of the destruction of moral and social values and the suffering inflicted on our peoples.

We must put an end to this situation and combine our efforts to halt the advance of this scourge and reduce it as much as possible. This battle should be fought by everyone, and not just a few. Here the United Nations and all its bodies, as well as all its Member States, should remain united.

It is also necessary for the countries producing these weapons to impose more effective controls on their manufacture and sale. They should realize that by doing so they benefit not only other countries, but also themselves. For if their societies are not affected directly by this increase in the manufacture and sale of the weapons, they are affected by related problems, such as drug consumption and trafficking, among others, activities that for protection purposes use many of the weapons that are circulating illegally.

Faced with this situation, Guatemala welcomes and fully supports the efforts of the Organization of American States (OAS) in its struggle against the illicit trafficking in and manufacture of weapons, as well as the production of ammunition, explosives and other related materials, a struggle to which the members of the Organization have committed themselves. Moreover, we support the holding in 2001 of a conference on the control of small arms.

The international community must make greater efforts in the fight against the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, and also assist countries that are adversely affected by this problem in their struggle to remove and destroy these devices. In the armed conflict that raged in Guatemala for 36 years many people were killed by these devices and many more were mutilated. Guatemala is fully aware of the consequences of the use of mines.

For that reason, even before we signed the Ottawa Convention, statutes were enacted in Guatemala to prohibit the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines. Guatemala thus became the first State in the western hemisphere to enact such legislation. In the conduct of demining and removal operations a scheme was applied combining the efforts of the State, civil society and the international community. This procedure reflects our conviction that to be effective demining campaigns and campaigns to remove explosive devices must involve all sectors of society.

We congratulate the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs on having reactivated the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development,which has its headquarters in Lima, Peru. Through this Centre cooperative efforts are being made with a view to implementing projects that will collectively contribute to the establishment of peace in our region.

To conclude, we wish to refer to the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Guatemala supports the proposal made by the delegation of Chile in the Committee that, given the lack of consensus on the agenda for the session and the date on which it is to be convened, we should consider establishing an informal group to carry out informal consultations to facilitate both the drawing up of an agenda and the attainment of consensus on the date of the session.

Mr. Bakoniarivo (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Madagascar is happy to convey to the Chairman and the other members of the Bureau heartfelt congratulations on their election to conduct the work of this important Committee. My delegation assures the Chairman of its full cooperation, and wishes him every success in our work.

The twentieth century has seen historic progress in the area of disarmament, but it has also been marked by indescribable horror and bloodshed resulting from the insecurity of today's world. The climate of uncertainty in international relations is now becoming a source of concern, because the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, was unable this year to contribute to enhancing the international security system. The same goes for the Disarmament Commission, which for the third year running could not reach consensus on the objectives and programme of work of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV).

This grim picture is made worse by another matter of growing concern to Governments and civil society: the phenomenon of the proliferation and illicit circulation of light weapons, which not only imperil security, but also

impede the most intensive development efforts. Estimated to number 500 million, these weapons are today the most deadly. Studies have shown that in most regional conflicts since 1990 light weapons were the only weapons used. Even if the accumulation of light weapons is not in itself the cause of conflicts, it cannot be denied that they can exacerbate internal struggles and make them more deadly.

The elimination of this scourge requires vigorous, coordinated international action so that the illicit trafficking in light weapons stops devastating civilian populations and causing humanitarian crises throughout the world. Accordingly, the Republic of Madagascar fully supports the holding of the international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects no later than 2001, pursuant to resolution 53/77 E.

Madagascar likewise endorses the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms concerning the objectives and scope of the conference, as set out in document A/54/258. In view of the disasters visited on Africa in particular by this scourge, my delegation supports the idea of choosing a venue for the conference in a capital where Africa has broad representation.

The emergence of nuclear weapons at the end of the Second World War and their development during the cold war have made the twentieth century the century of the nuclear threat. This threat persists as our century draws to a close. It is true that progress has been made in this area in recent years, but serious efforts are still required to rid our planet of the nuclear danger. The only effective guarantee that humankind can have, faced with this threat, is the elimination of all existing nuclear weapons and their means of delivery.

The impasse in the negotiations on a convention concerning the production of fissile materials, and the persistence of obstacles to the entry into force of the CTBT, compel recognition that we are still far from the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. While general disarmament is the responsibility of all States, the nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility and duty to free the world of these barbaric weapons and to establish a climate of confidence among States. The Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference to be held in 2000 is an ideal opportunity to mobilize the political will to build a world free of nuclear weapons.

The consensus reached in the Disarmament Commission on the principles and guidelines that should govern new nuclear-weapon-free zones could be a point of reference and a source of encouragement in this matter, however difficult.

General and complete disarmament under effective international control, which was advocated almost 20 years ago by the General Assembly, must remain our ultimate goal in all efforts to establish peace and stability in the world. The entry into force on 1 March 1999 of the Ottawa Convention is a remarkable advance in this process. Madagascar welcomes the destruction of more than 14 million mines, stockpiled in 20 countries, as well as the spectacular decline in the number of accidents caused by mines. We also welcome the holding in Maputo this year of the First Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, which resulted in the adoption of important measures to implement it. The Ottawa Convention has once again proved that cooperation can bring beneficial results for humanity. Madagascar hopes that the same spirit and the same philosophy will prevail over more selfish, narrow considerations, so that the cause of disarmament can be advanced in all areas.

This time of uncertainty and insecurity in which we live demands a real commitment by Member States of the United Nations to translate into concrete action their commitment to the main purposes of the United Nations: the maintenance of international peace and security. The twenty-first century offers us a splendid opportunity to redeem our past mistakes and build a world which bases its security not on weapons but on understanding and cooperation for development.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to associate myself with the congratulations addressed to the Chairman on his well-deserved election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. His eminent qualities, which we all recognize, guarantee that our deliberations will be successful. My delegation assures him of its full cooperation and ongoing support. I should also like to take this opportunity to pay his predecessor, Mr. André Mernier, a well-deserved tribute for the way in which he performed his duties as Chairman of the Committee last year. Finally, my delegation would also like to congratulate the secretariat on the high quality of the documents that the Committee has before it.

My delegation, like other delegations which have already spoken, is very concerned about events that have characterized our world since the last session of the General Assembly. Looking back on the status of peace and

security during this period does not give grounds for optimism. I will give a few examples.

Three years after its opening for signature, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) still lacks the number of ratifications necessary for its entry into force. The Conference on Disarmament was not able to agree at its 1999 substantive session on a programme of work, because of profound differences on questions relating to nuclear disarmament, preventing an arms race in outer space and the drafting of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for the manufacture of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

For the third time, the Disarmament Commission was unable to reach consensus on the objectives and programme of work of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV). Also, the universality of legal instruments prohibiting chemical and biological weapons is far from being attained. Hence, weapons of mass destruction could for some time to come continue to pose for humankind the terrifying threat of annihilation.

In the grim picture I have just described there are, fortunately, a few bright spots. I shall speak of just two.

First, there was the entry into force on 1 March this year of the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines. This is a great source of satisfaction and a real sign of hope in our struggle to ban these mindless weapons, which kill and mutilate innocent civilians every day — children, women and old people. We welcome the holding in Maputo from 3 to 7 May 1999 of the First Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. Important decisions were taken at that meeting to facilitate the Convention's implementation. It also made it possible to continue the international campaign to banish these weapons for ever. Cameroon participated in the work done at Maputo, and we have ratified the Ottawa Convention, thus confirming our commitment to this worthwhile campaign.

Another reason for great hope is the tremendous mobilization of the international community against the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. It is estimated that there are more than 500 million of them in the world, and light weapons are the ones most used in current conflicts. Millions of people, particularly civilians, have been killed or wounded by these weapons; they include hundreds of thousands of children.

We must face the facts: these weapons, described as "light", have in recent years claimed more victims than the so-called weapons of mass destruction. Their accumulation and their spread among populations contribute greatly to the exacerbation of conflicts; they make them longer and increase by tenfold their deadly power. The consequences for the security, stability and development of countries, and the consequences for people, are disastrous.

Given the magnitude of this threat, we should certainly be grateful to the United Nations, which played a leading role in placing the question of light weapons at the forefront of the international agenda. The General Assembly has decided to convene an international conference on the illicit trade in small arms in all its aspects, to be held no later than 2001. Last month the Security Council, as a prelude to this conference, held a high-level debate on the matter.

Mindful of the dangers these weapons pose to the peoples of their countries, Ministers of the member countries of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa decided at their tenth ministerial meeting, held in Yaoundé last October, to organize a subregional conference on small arms and light weapons. That conference, to be held in N'Djamena in a few days' time, will enable Central Africa, which has suffered many devastating conflicts for many years and is a zone particularly afflicted by these weapons, to work out the proper machinery to control them and combat their proliferation. Cameroon, as Chairman of that Committee, urgently appeals to the international community to provide real assistance to implement the programme of action to be adopted at the end of the conference, which will be communicated to us during the present session.

My country is particularly concerned about the ravages caused in Central Africa by the weapons used in the incessant wars which have made it one of the most unstable areas of the continent. We very much want to work during our term of office to build confidence among the countries of the subregion through regular meetings of leaders to discuss questions of security, stability, the development of their countries and the well-being of their peoples.

In February this year the heads of State established a mechanism for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts in Central Africa, the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), and adopted a Declaration on Peace, Security and Stability. This important Declaration appears in document A/53/868, annex II. The

peoples of the region, so sorely tested by recurrent confrontations, punctuated by massacres and other massive violations of human rights, pin great hopes on the implementation of COPAX, the subregional parliament and the subregional human rights centre, as well as other institutions initiated by the Standing Advisory Committee, such as the rapid alert mechanism. We set great store by these mechanisms, and we appeal for decisive, increased assistance from the international community.

The concern reiterated so often by the leaders of the Central African countries to lift from their peoples the spectre of war is rooted in a faithful commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter. Cameroon is convinced that these principles must remain at the heart of actions and initiatives for peace, whether regional or worldwide. My country, committed to these principles, the only principles that can guarantee the development of harmonious relations between States, and therefore the safeguard of the legitimate aspirations of their peoples to peace and well-being, has always set the logic of peace and the peaceful resolution of disputes against the logic of war in its relations with its neighbours.

We regard it as the duty of the international community to redouble its efforts for peace, harmony and solidarity between countries and peoples. It is also its duty to build a better world, a world on the threshold of the next twenty-first century and the third millennium, a world resonating with the song of hope of the peoples of the United Nations, glorifying peace, understanding and cooperation.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.